DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

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Looking Ahead

IN A RECENT article in the *New Statesman* Ritchie Calder stressed the problem of modern rationalisation arising from the substitution of such mechanisms as the photo-electric cell (let alone more elaborate machinery) for the human hand and eye. This is, of course, a basic Twentieth Century problem—war or no war—but it is also of immediate urgency. For, as Calder points out, the absorption of hundreds of thousands of people by the immediate and imperative needs of war industry poses the problem of a post-war slump beside which that of the twenties would pale into insignificance. While, of course, economic trends, or even economic disasters, might well arise from this war to make this general theory inoperative, it does seem imperative that serious thought should be given now to the problems and dangers which lie ahead. The plea for a Ministry of Reconstruction demands consideration at once; for it is now, and not after the conflict, that plans must be made to counter the serious problems which will face us when the war machine comes abruptly to rest. In this respect the film could play its part. Once plans had been made, their scope and implication could be vividly and dramatically projected to the people of this country. The problem could be stated, and the part to be played by citizens in meeting it could be clearly analysed; and, more importantly, the plans for industrial and social reconstruction could be made familiar to those millions whom they would most affect, well before the moment when they would come into operation. Even without the formation of a Reconstruction Ministry, there is no reason why a first batch of films should not be made—under expert advice—through the Films Division of the Ministry of Information. Even during a *blitzkrieg*, the habit of forward-looking is worth cultivating, even if it needs a telescope to bring the murky future into focus.

Work Well Begun . . .

IT IS A PITY that the exigencies of the war have put a temporary stoppage to much of the valuable work which has recently been undertaken by the Imperial Relations Trust. The Second Annual Report of this body states that "the activities of the Trust have been virtually in abeyance for the past six months" and that it has been decided that for the present the income shall be allowed to accumulate. This general decision is, under the circumstances, no doubt inevitable. It is, however, gratifying to note that an exception has been made as regards certain film activities. As is well known, John Grierson visited Australia and New Zealand, as Film Officer to the Trust, in the early days of the war. Previously he had, in the same capacity, visited Canada (1938), and the subsequent setting up of the National Film Board (under the Canadian Film Act, of 1939) was just in time to lead to the invigoration of Canadian film production under conditions of war. The Trust's report states that "it is expected that Mr. Grierson will shortly be seconded from his work with the Trust" in order to continue in his position as Dominion Film Commissioner in Canada. In all these activities the initiative of the Trust can command nothing but praise. In addition, however, the Trust has been responsible for a technical film on the Welsh Grass Breeding Station at Aberystwyth, which should command good specialised showings in all the Dominions; and it has also continued the policy of making grants to the Empire Film Library. In view of these valuable activities, we can only hope that any postponement of further plans will be brief, and that the Trust will soon feel itself in a position to continue on the same lines a policy so well begun.

Five Minutes

THE FIVE-MINUTE FILMS of the Ministry of Information apparently are not meeting with that degree of public appreciation that they have secured from the National Press. Subsequent letters and press comments from the provinces reveal a good deal of concern at the type of propaganda. It is hoped that the Research Organisation which has been under such fire in the House of Commons recently will have adequate check made of audience reaction. For instance, we hear "another million bullets" from the film "A Call to Arms" has become a term of derision in Glasgow.

We wonder whether these films have been conceived as propaganda or as good films about war subjects. They certainly neglect one important advertising principle—that of continuity. Audiences seeing a different propaganda message each week will tend to be confused, and it is our opinion that unless the advertising principle of continuity is adopted and a number of films instead of one made round a central theme, the impression of one film is likely to be wiped out by the succeeding film.

It would be interesting to know how far advertising experts and psychologists have been consulted on the choice of subject and method of treatment. Again, for instance, we hear that "Miss Grant Opens the Door" frightens some people rather than prepares them. We must make yet another plea for coherent planning so that the audience does not get muddled impressions, and that the coherent planning should be supervised by propagandists and experts in public reaction.

Kine Weekly

THE *Kinematograph Weekly* has long been a good friend to the Industry. It has often been more outspoken in its editorials than the rest of the trade press. This is only a preface to say that the *Kine* is, in future, devoting a special feature every month recording the progress of documentary. They intend to give monthly check lists of propaganda films so that exhibitors will know where to book them, a matter which has caused some difficulty in the past. Thank you, Mr. Rayment and Mr. Carter.

Accuracy

MR. DUFF COOPER, replying to a question in the House, said that fourteen films had been made under the auspices of his Department and had been shown to the public.

We do not think the Ministry should assume credit for the work of other sponsors, who were responsible for several of the films in this list. *Men of Africa* was sponsored by the Colonial Empire Marketing Board before the War; *The Voice of the Guns* and *Italy Beware* by the French Ministry of Information; *Musical Poster* was made by the British Council, and *Nonquassi* as an independent venture by Leon Schauder.

This leaves nine films for which the Ministry were directly responsible and six of these were five-minute films, leaving the Ministry's utilisation of all other branches of film propaganda to three pictures.

The Biter Bit

BLUSTER AND THREATS of a lawsuit followed the production of March of Time's *Inside Nazi Germany* a year or two ago, with the result that this anti-Nazi film gained world-wide publicity and distribution. Now the Germany Embassy in Washington is infuriated by March of Time's unsolicited help in distributing *Baptism of Fire*, the Nazi film of a blitzkrieg which is specially designed to terrify neutral countries. Every German effort failed to persuade American cinemas to accept the film until Louis de Rochemont, producer of March of Time, stepped into the breach. He copied the film, fitted it with a new, anti-Nazi commentary and incorporated it in a March of Time release called *The Ramparts We Watch*. Now the ungrateful Embassy are threatening another lawsuit.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC

By a correspondent in America

"TOO LITTLE and too late" is the general comment on the British war film record in North America. This applies particularly to feature films. It applies less to newsreels. It has been generally appreciated that in the last three months the newsreel service from England has "greatly improved", "has improved 200 per cent," "has provided 10 to 15 really good stories." There has been "more material and better material", "greater variety of story angles and more interesting story angles," e.g., the industrial angles of the war, the life of the people, and avoidance of repetitive troop marching. The origin of these comments is American and may be taken as authoritative.

Without detracting from the improvement in the facilities given, and news value encouraged by the latter-day dispensation at the M.O.I., other contributing factors will doubtless be remembered in the account. This medium of exchange was already established. It called for no exceptional wit on the part of the M.O.I. to use and exploit. Producer Hitler may be said to have provided the dramatic stories. Moreover, there has been no competition—as in the stills field—from Germany. America's editorial policy is to be thanked for this, not the intrinsic inferiority of the German material. The German material viewed has, in fact, been a model of powerful and thorough production. In the stills field—it may be worth interposing—the general editorial comment is that Germany still has a big lead in news value and technical quality.

Feature films reflect a deep inadequacy of policy and purpose. What has there been? The films sent over have been scattered, odd, unequal, and have built up no single or solid impression. The millions spent in creating a British film industry have produced no dividend of influence in England's hour of need. Nor does it seem that either the Films Council or the Film Section of the M.O.I. has been able to bring the industry into national focus.

There was *The Lion Has Wings*. It made a huge impression in Canada on its first showing, though speeding developments of war put it out of date in later release. To date, it has been the most useful job sent over, at least for Canada. Its success was due to the fact that it exploited quickly the sense of victory attached to the first raids. The sense of constructive democracy in the first reels was also a great help. It provided essential evidence that England's claim to democratic status had a basis in reality. No single factor has been more lacking in England's propaganda, and England's friends in America have felt the lack acutely. Some complaints were registered in Canada about *The Lion*, to the effect that it was too obvious propaganda, meaning that only Germans were killed and were made gratuitously to look wickeder young men than their British counterparts. Distance shows up that sort of exaggeration. Merle Oberon's complaint to the stars just got by but tended to sicken people on recollection. It had a synthetic and false note and seemed silly alongside the really weeping women of Poland as they came through on the newsreels.

In the United States, criticism of *The Lion* was more pronounced and sufficient to make the film an indifferent commercial proposition. The propaganda was thought too raw.

The Warning dropped in about the same time as *The Lion Has Wings* but was not much good for the Sitzkrieg period. The Canadians tried to bring it up to date but to no great effect. It was recognised as pre-war or, alternatively, people thought it—at that time—a scarer. The operative factor was that, in a world of news geared to the minute, it was not fresh; and it seemed to lack importance.

For Freedom—the Gainsborough Will Fyffe film—opened well enough and was much praised for the re-enactment of the *Graf Spee* and *Altmark* episodes, but there have been no signs of it making large appeal or doing big business on later release. The comment attached to it is the fatal one that "people are getting fed up with war". This does not mean all that it says. It only means that people can't be bothered with war films that fail to connect with their midriff and don't automatically accept expressions of patriotism that savour of wishful thinking. The song "We'll hang up our washing on the Siegfried Line" conveys to-day an arid record of Britain's past complacency. Will Fyffe's intimation that he'll give Hitler a damn good licking—for lack of context perhaps—misses the note of authority. A distant audience was inclined to doubt whether the newsreel naïfs who appeared in this film were the sort of people who could lick anything.

For Freedom was also "too late". It was "not released at a good time", meaning that the *Graf Spee* victory had already become insignificant before the march of subsequent events and was not "victorious" enough to strengthen the North American heart at a critical time.

Pastor Hall, released in Canada and about to be released—it is said energetically—in the United States, raised another problem of propaganda. Again, the film has been admired for certain intrinsic production qualities, but it is observed that concentration camps and other European cruelties create only a sense of distance in the native mind and a feeling of "Thank God we emigrated from Europe to a decent country". The Europeans will rightly reply that the American genius has its own capacity for cruelty, but unquestionably there is a native shrinking from the horror motif. There is also a sneaking feeling that it is the old armless-baby-act of the last war being worked all over again. One cynical comment made is that it is interesting to note the British studios' sudden interest in the fate of civilization. This comment is obviously not typical. The comment that the Jewish miserere is a bit of a bore is, on the

other hand, a great deal more typical than people will officially confess. Jewish maltreatment, concentration camps, sadistic lashings are, one is afraid, old stuff, alien, slightly discredited, and do not command people's deepest attention. This may represent escapism on the part of the American mind. On the other hand, as Mr. Chamberlain might say, they concern distant peoples of whom America knows, or wants to know, as little as possible. The bond between democratic America and democratic Europe is not intimate enough, nor is this, seemingly, the way to make it so.

Similar comment applies, of course, to certain Hollywood films. Of *Four Sons* it is said that the Central European *motif* has already been put in the shade by subsequent events in France. In the case of *Mortal Storm* it was generally felt that the protagonists were basically a better crew than those of *Pastor Hall*. They were "sympathetic" and an understanding of that difference would undoubtedly mean a great deal to British war films. It was observed of *Mortal Storm* by the important writer, Morley Callaghan, that the light in young Nazi eyes meant something positive, for which the film's democratic argument did not altogether find an equivalent. He bravely, in a coast to coast broadcast in Canada, went on to ask how the light in the democratic eye might be similarly commanded and the liberalism of the French Revolution again put on the march. He challenged the documentary films to do it, feeling that they would know best how to get to the heart of the matter.

Among other British war films, *Convoy* (Tennyson) and *Contraband* (Powell) have not yet been shown (August 7). There are considerable exhibitor expectations regarding both. *Mein Kampf—My Crimes* and *Shadow of the Swastika* (Maxwell) are just in. The latter is described by the bush telegraph of the trade as "Just a lot of newsreels and a problem to market". There is greater expectation of George Formby's *In the Air*, because it gives some promise of comedy. *Madmen of Europe* was shown recently as a second feature. Technically, it rates ordinary B but, with the pertinence of a parachute attack on an English country house, it commands some A-B attention.

There is nothing continuous or solid to report regarding the war features. Callaghan's comment remains the critical key to the situation. The light in the democratic eye has not been dramatically demonstrated and—putting it at its simplest—the opportunity has not been adequately seized to make the American spirit feel at one with the English spirit. Nor does the inept resuscitation of the snob message of John Drinkwater's *King's People* fill the vacuum. It is the one kind of message which can never fill the vacuum. Ironically, the people who are trying hardest—and perhaps do best—to fill it, are not the English but the Americans. Walter Wanger's *Foreign Correspondent* and *Long Voyage Home* are typical of that effort.

The British documentaries, which one would have presumed had a great deal to do with that democratic light in the eye most needful to British-American relationship, have been conspicuous by their absence. It was interesting to note that *The Lion Has Wings*, when it wanted to project a positive and constructive democratic England, had to go to the documentaries for its key images. It seemed for a moment that the lesson had been learned. But there has been little since to fulfil that beginning. *The Warning*, already mentioned, was pre-war and out-of-date when it arrived. *First Days* was admired for some technical niceties, but was too slow and failed as propaganda. Perhaps, because it described an early phase of the war, and that Hitler's mass efficiency was being fought by a crowd, it gave the impression that England was being fought by a crowd of bewildered amateurs. One expert observer of opinion thought it would do harm, because there seemed to be a subconscious streak of defeatism in it and people might be inclined to say "Well, if that is all England feels like doing about the war, why should we, 3,000 miles away, worry overmuch?" The path of propaganda is certainly difficult and the distance across the Atlantic has not been psychologically conquered when such strange impressions are given by an official film. The questions of tempo and of confident "pay-offs" are of particularly vital importance.

Squadron 992, obviously much admired in England, is likewise slow and, from an American point of view, finished ineffectively. It, too, was "too late". Its attack on the Forth Bridge, so excellently shot and edited, is to-day slight alongside the current newsreel battle scenes from the Straits of Dover. In America, the film has been clipped to a one-reeler to get some pace into it. In Canada, on the other hand, the film is being retained practically *in toto*, but is being given pertinence to present-day events. Refocused in this way, it is expected to have a wide success. Half a dozen new documentaries are heralded, but have not yet been seen.

This would appear to be the whole account to date and the only thing to say about it is that England should thank heaven for the B.B.C. That organisation has, within the last few months, been gaining more and more respect with its overseas programmes. Its change of heart and character has been so widely remarked that nothing in the field of information has created more confidence in the improving spirit of England. Perhaps its clutch of talkative littérateurs are not universally admired. People observe that there is too much of the "There'll always be an England" *motif* in the material and of the country lanes, cottages and fields of something or other which go with that *motif*. But, on the other hand, a new authority has come into many voices and the touch becomes blessedly a little more common. The radio newsreel is an especial success.

There is a lesson in this for the film people at the M.O.I. Let them encourage what is genuine; let them allow the people of England to emerge from the synthetic fog which now hides them from observation; and the people of America will warm to a voice which they deeply and rightly believe is common to both.

POSTSCRIPT. This article is due to catch the Clipper. Only a brief note can therefore be added on three British documentaries which have just been seen. These are *Men of the Lightship*, *Britain at Bay* and *Behind the Guns*. Of these, in haste, it may be stated that their qualities are much admired. There is no doubt that if films of this calibre can be sent over regularly to Canada and the U.S.A. they will achieve effective and organised distribution everywhere. *August 10th*, 1940.

12 MONTHS—A SURVEY OF THE M. OF I.

The Report by the Select Committee on National Expenditure, dealing with the Films Division of the Ministry of Information, has been published as we go to Press. A detailed analysis of its contents must be reserved for our next issue. But it is clear that the Committee is under grave misapprehensions as to the meaning and value of films as propaganda, and of non-theatrical distribution, in time of war. The issues raised are fundamental, for the Committee's attitude suggests that vital National needs are once more to be ignored. Meantime, the article below (written before the publication of the Report) takes on an added significance.

A YEAR AGO the Ministry of Information appeared. One cannot say was "born" for that word implies conception, a prenatal period and childhood, and the Ministry had none of these. It came into being as an adult—defective, crippled and unplanned but still an adult. To account for this, it was widely said at the time that the authorities had forbidden the planning of the services of information lest such planning were regarded by the Germans as an unfriendly act.

The Ministry of Information has had a year to settle down, to find itself new limbs where it started without them and to lop off the unnecessary ones. At the beginning of the war most people who had given thought to the services of propaganda—and even some of the staff of the Ministry itself—had quite a clear conception of the broad objectives of the Ministry. It had to do two things. First, it had to provide a day-to-day service of news and information to keep the public informed at home and abroad, to keep up spirits, to explain the events of the war as they developed and to allay rumours.

But more important than this first job was the really big task. The Ministry had to bring alive Britain's war aims. We went into the war to fight for liberty. At the beginning of the war the leaders of the country took for granted that the traditions and realities of the British and French Empires justified the potential sacrifice of millions of lives. They were content with generalisations. If our Dominions and if our Allies and the neutrals could not always see the point, that was their fault. Anyway, the people in England who said that those at home or abroad needed a statement of our aims were "defeatists": what they really meant was that they could not see what the war was about themselves.

So it was that the greatest opportunity that the Empire has ever had to render account of its service to the world was passed by. We were content to repeat the words "Democracy", "Freedom" and "Anti-Nazism" without stating what we meant by them. The result has been disastrous; as months went by it became increasingly clear that some even among our closest Allies were doubtful of the issues. The French collapsed, not only because of force of arms, but also because of force of moral propaganda from Germany, which had succeeded, over a long period, in causing internal disruption and disloyalty. The Germans had known all along that in the coming war, propaganda was to be as important as guns. Had we developed an equally clear propaganda conception of the democratic freedom for which we are fighting, it is not a wild statement to say that an imaginative Ministry of Information, working closely with the War Departments, could have done much to save the day in France. But the bravery and strategy of our troops and airmen and the men in little boats were not matched by an equal bravery of outlook, and an equal moral strategy on the part of the Ministry.

In looking back it is incredible that the Minister of Information should not immediately have been made a member of the War Cabinet: in fact, until recently the Ministry did not create policy in the sense that the First Lord of the Admiralty creates policy. The Ministry was a negative body; it carried out orders but it did not initiate them. The Ministry misunderstood its own function, and failed to fight for its own rights. If the Government were attempting to run the war as if it were rather a difficult kind of peace, it was the job of the Ministry to tell them with authority that this would lead—as indeed it did—to lethargic complacency among the general public and bewilderment in the United States of America. If the Government appeared to be fighting the war only to ensure the permanency of the ideals of 1939, it was the busines of the Ministry to drive into their heads that neither the Nation nor the Empire nor the Allies nor the Neutrals could be expected to pull their full weight only to preserve the past.

If you ask anyone in the Ministry of Information whether these things are true, in nine cases out of ten they will agree, though they will find excuses. Some will say that the Government did not give them a lead, some that the Treasury did not not give them enough money, some that what one is suggesting is premature—or, most common of all, that what one is suggesting is too late; because now there is hardly time to do anything at all. Yet one cannot believe that an energetic Ministry would give these sort of excuses. It was not the job of the Government to give them a lead; it was the Ministry's job to give the Government a lead on the vital matter of public information. If the Treasury held up money, it was the Ministry's job to fight for it. The function of a lively Ministry of Information can never be to accept orders and to carry out other people's ideas or, because other people have no ideas at all, to do nothing.

Such excuses themselves suggest what was and, to a great extent, still is the matter with the Ministry of Information. Its staff is able but infertile of ideas. It comprises men not of action but of contemplation. Their temporal home is Bloomsbury; their spiritual home is there too.

The Films Division reflected in miniature the inhibitions of its parent. Sir Joseph Ball, now serving on the Defence Security Executive, which has recently come in for much parliamentary criticism, was appointed director of the Films Division at the outbreak of war. Described in "Who's Who" as Director of the Conservative Research Department, it was said that he had also been in charge of the film propaganda of the Conservative Central Office. This alone could hardly have been reckoned as a qualification, since of all groups handling films, the Conservative party was certainly not the most effective and their films were, generally speaking, not of high quality.

Ball held his position for some six months and, at any rate to the outside world, his department appeared to do next to nothing beyond endorsing *The Lion Has Wings* as suitable British propaganda. This film was held by a number of people to have done as much harm abroad as it did good. Apart from *The Lion*, early film propaganda was almost wholly confined to the G.P.O. Film Unit and the Newsreels. The G.P.O. was soon in the field with *The First Days* made under the threat of air raids on London which did not materialise until last month. The film was made speedily and was in the public cinemas within a short time of its completion. No doubt the administration at the Ministry had not yet been able to wreck the carefully developed relationships between the G.P.O. and the film trade, for their second production, *Squadron* 992, a film on the attempted bombing of the Forth Bridge, was held up for months until all topicality had been lost.

The Newsreel companies, not suffering from inhibitions and having ready-made distribution to hand, waded in with such films as *Ring of Steel*, *Drums of the Desert*, *'Arf a Mo, Hitler* (Paramount), *The King's Own*, *A Nation Springs to Arms* and *The Raising of Soldiers* (Movietone), all of them very competent jobs.

Ball gave an enthusiastic talk to pressmen in which he said that British films would be shown in every cinema in the world. Trade committees were set up under the chairmanship of Ball, but they do not appear to have been active in initiating production. The newsreels were made much of, but, in spite of efforts by the Films Division, they received poor facilities for shooting from the Military Authorities.

Ball was followed by Sir Kenneth Clark, Director of the National Gallery, where he had made for himself a great reputation. By the time he took up his post it was clear that the urgent need was to produce films. The situation was such that almost any films would have been better than no films. Within a short time of his appointment, the trade press reported that no less than 64 short films had been ordered and that arrangements were in progress for a feature film in Canada. What has happened to these 64 films has never been revealed, but it is significant that recently the Minister of Information reported to Parliament that the total effort of the Ministry to date had been fourteen films. In our "Notes of the Month" it will be seen that at least one of the films listed was made before the war started, and that others were independent productions subsequently acquired by the Ministry.

One guesses that the reason why no great advance was made under Sir Kenneth Clark was that much of his time and much of his energies were taken up with putting his house in order. Within a few months Sir Kenneth Clark was promoted to the post of co-ordinating the creative services of the Ministry and his place was taken by Mr J. L. Beddington, lately Assistant General Manager of Shell-Mex and B.P. and Director of Publicity for that company. As an enlightened Director of Publicity he had a reputation second to none. He had for years abandoned the conventional chorus-girl-cum-petrol-pump style of advertising and had developed the finest output of posters that any company in Great Britain has ever had. He extended his sense of public relations into exhibitions. His company was interested in the preservation of rural England and did everything to remove unsightly hoardings. Although he brought to his new job no direct knowledge of films, he had all the qualifications for an enlightened understanding of the problem of presenting the war in films to Great Britain and abroad.

Under Beddington the Films Division has moved forward. It has not only promised to make films; it has actually made them, and they have been seen by millions of people. Although no plans for non-theatrical distribution and production have been published, it is believed that steps are likely to be taken in the near future to develop this fundamental side of film work. It is clear that the Films Division is meeting the immediate situation: the five-minute films cover the day-to-day needs of propaganda, although it is to be regretted that their appearance is not linked with campaigns in other media, such as the Press and the Radio. One thing is surprising about them. Although the films are of a high technical quality, in some cases they show signs of *not* being geared to realities. They seem to be shots in the dark. For example, a five-minute film on food stressed the value of eggs when they were not obtainable. A film urging women to enter the munition factories had to be taken off in some picture houses because there were no jobs for women. A film on how to deal with a parachutist has drawn wide public comment—as any cinema-goer with ears will witness—because it provides the person meeting the German parachutist with a revolver taken from a dead German; most of us have no revolvers and not all of us can expect to find dead Germans available. No doubt the Division attributes these slips to other Government Departments—the Ministry of Labour, Food, Supply or Home Security—but it is surprising that the Division itself had not got the *nous* to sense the position.

In spite of Beddington's unquestionable sense of public relations there is, as yet, no sign that his Division is running more than a superficial advertising campaign for the war. His sense of public relations has not yet made itself felt either in Great Britain or abroad. The articulation of the nation's war effort and war aims at home and overseas, on the public screens, in the schools, the Y.M.C.A.s, the Trades Union Institutes, the public halls of Britain, the Dominions, the Americas and the rest of the world, still remains to be achieved.

It is unfair to level this criticism wholly at the Films Division. The whole Ministry of Information suffers from a neurosis. We believe that it fears to articulate the social changes which are inevitably upon us. It is passing by the greatest opportunity

that this country has ever had to state the fundamental truths which lie behind the Empire. Though one would not guess it from the posters at present on the streets, our Dominions are not grocers' stores to supply this country on the cheap. They support great and living cultures of their own. Their people have come into this war because they believe in the principles which we stand for, and they ask, in return, one thing: that we should state the principles clearly and for the whole world to understand. It is the job of the Ministry of Information, not to sit passively by, but to give a lead in morale to this country and to the world.

At the moment the Ministry is distrusted—and rightly so—because it has never stated unequivocally the deeper issues which underlie the present struggle. The Ministry is laughed at instead of being respected. This is because it is out of touch with the people. A Ministry of Information, to be efficient, must be trusted by the people. It can only be trusted by them if they feel that there is mutual understanding. So far this understanding has been lacking.

The popular press recognises and repeats over and over again that we do not need spurs to our courage—the British people have never lacked courage. We do not need emergency measures to keep up our spirits—our spirits can look after themselves. What we do need is a morale lead. This lead only the Ministry of Information can give. We cannot do better than complete this article by quoting the front page of *John Bull* of August 17th, 1940:—

"We, Government and people, are still 'flying blind'. We have no clear view of our goal nor idea of how we shall attain it. We know we are fighting for our existence, for the destruction of tyranny and the establishment of a just peace. . . . Now, when the tide of war is lapping the Mediterranean shores, when our own land is facing the gravest threat in its history, it is more than ever essential that we should proclaim our war aims, not only for our own inspiration, but also to convince the world of the honesty of our endeavour. . . . We must efface the memories of our past blunderings, our hesitations and inefficiency, the bankrupt statesmanship that threw away our prestige. Unless we make a bold and confident statement of what we propose to do with the victory we shall surely win, our neutral friends may be excused for thinking that we have no aim at all. They must be assured that we are not fighting to restore the wretched 'peace' of the last few years. We have said 'Good-bye' to the old Europe of makeshift frontiers and nationalist rivalries. . . . Britain's aim must be something finer, saner and wiser. We must aim at a settled peace. And we must formulate our plans now. That is the wish of the nation, voiced by intelligent men and women of all parties and of none."

DOCUMENTARY RE-DEFINED

SINCE DOCUMENTARY films have so often been identified with propaganda, the word "Documentary" has long been a coloured one; that is, it has stood, not only for a type of film, but has carried an æsthetic significance. The word "Documentary" has, to some people, suggested "good films", to others "bad films".

Quite recently, the writer said to someone that such-and-such a film was a documentary. The reply was that the film in question could not have been a documentary since the speaker had enjoyed it. Equally misleading and foolish is the other group which says that such-and-such a film could not be a good one because it was *not* a documentary.

It still seems necessary to define "Documentary". For years makers of documentary have developed quite a simple theory complementary to their practice. This theory says that, if one takes people—be they civilians or soldiers, men or women—in their ordinary occupation and the events of this world as they happen, be they war or peace, and relates them to the society of which they are a part, the resulting film can be lifted from the purely informative into the dramatic. If one can relate an office to the industry that it serves, an industry to the world which it supplies, a process to the use to which the article made is put, a man's occupation to the society of which he is a member, a dramatic quality will emerge which will hold and entertain as surely as any fictional story. When documentary films do have a story, they rely not on the fictional meanderings of the novelist, but on actual events. The three recent G.P.O. successes, *North Sea*, *Squadron* 992 and *Men of the Lightship*, are based on just such analyses of real life.

Secondly, the maker of documentary films believes that the things which hold an audience are of two kinds: Hollywood with its Garbos and Hedy Lamarrs supplies one kind; the other is the satisfaction of curiosity. People like to know things and to see things; in fact, people like to see for themselves, provided that the seeing is done without pedagogy. And the record of documentaries in the cinemas since 1929 would seem to vindicate this point of view.

Documentary films deal with real people and the real world round us. They bring people face to face with themselves and cater for a universal appetite for information. Films like *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Pasteur* and *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, and the discursive French films on middle-class life come within the definition of "documentary", for all of them re-create actuality.

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THE SEA HAWK

(FILM OF THE MONTH)

THIS TYPICAL costume melodrama from the Warner stables would presumably hardly qualify for special prominence in DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER were it not for the fact that it raises—in a very interesting manner—a number of considerations regarding propaganda and public morale. For, in addition to swashbuckling and spectacle, in addition to the regulation overload of lush music, in addition to Flora Robson's return to the role of Queen Elizabeth—in addition, in fact, to all the normal historical clichès which Warner Bros. have so successfully exploited for so many years, there is this time something more unusual, no less than an attempt to depict a close similarity between the Anglo-Spanish set-up of the sixteenth century and the Anglo-German set-up of the twentieth.

The story of *The Sea Hawk* must therefore be regarded from two angles. In the first place, it presents the usual incidents; that is, Errol Flynn does a Drake-Hawkins act, capturing Spanish vessels, raiding mule-trains at Panama, getting captured and condemned to the galleys, escaping, and returning to England with the secret papers for the Queen. But in the second place, an attempt is made throughout the film, to relate the Sea Hawk's exploits to the political *mise-en-scène* of the period immediately preceding the Armada attack.

This story—as told by the film—is roughly as follows. Philip of Spain is consumed by a desire to conquer the world, but is convinced he won't do it unless he first conquers England. Elizabeth of England, while mistrusting and disliking Spain, has no desire for a war, and hates the idea of spending public funds on the construction of a large navy. On the other hand, she gives informal and clandestine approval to the exploits of the privateers who pounce on the Spanish treasure ships and divert their contents to England. Her Lord Chancellor is a Fifth Columnist, hand in glove with the Spanish Ambassador. The main question before her is whether the Armada is going to be directed against England, or not: The Fifth Columnists and the more conservative members of her cabinet say no. The bluff Admirals say yes. The danger becomes acute. Flynn pulls a boner on a privateering expedition in Nombre de Dios bay, and a virtual ultimatum is delivered by the Spanish Ambassador to the effect that the privateers must be disbanded and imprisoned forthwith, or else. Faced by the fact of an inadequate Navy, Elizabeth reluctantly submits to the demand (here the word "appeasement" is actually used). In the meantime she starts building a big navy as fast as she can; and when Flynn escapes from the galleys and brings news of the Armada's sailing date (slaying the Lord Chancellor *en route*), she has a big navy ready. War is declared, and in a speech from the poop of the new flagship she doles out a row of sentences which appear to have more than a chance similarity to some of the speeches in the House of Commons during September 1939.

This effort to draw a historico-political parallel is both well meaning and ingenious. But it fails. Historically it fails because, among other things, there was no British Empire in those days. Politically it fails because it is just muddle-headed. The producers are clearly expecting us to identify personal as well as material similarities, but unfortunately for them, and us, all attempts at identification tend to break down. It is easy enough to compare aggressor Spain with aggressor Germany; to see in Philip, with his Inquisition and galley slaves, a foretaste of Adolph with his Gestapo and concentration camps; all this is plain sailing. But when it comes to the characters of the Queen and her court (and it is impossible, from the film's mood and context, not to continue the comparisons) we are bogged in a veritable Bannockburn of cross-purposes.

Vainly we try to spot our favourite or our most disliked politicians; we flit from Elizabeth to the Lord Chancellor, from the Spanish Ambassador to the Admiral of the Fleet, befogged and bewildered by ideas which, if set down here, would probably involve libel actions, if not arrest for creating alarm and despondency.

Finally, there is one parallel which doesn't fit at all, however much we try. The Elizabethan privateers (clearly, if tacitly approved by the Throne) were attacking Spanish shipping in both Spanish and neutral waters for a long time before war was declared. Where is the modern tie-up, we ask vainly, only to be bewildered still more when we find the said privateers being sacrificed, like the Czechs, on a Munichean altar.

The question is, how far it is useful to draw what is, in rather cloudy terms, an inspiring and invigorating moral from the Elizabethan conflict, if at the same time the circumstances of the period are strained, and indeed racked, in an attempt to provide a twin for every modern event? Many people may well claim that there is a danger here of the public's mind being unnecessarily befuddled; and fuddlement just now—even when done with the best intentions in the world, and by citizens of a country on whose sympathy and aid we most emphatically count—is just the opposite of what is needed.

The story of the Armada itself would have been a better choice; for our war aims at the moment are simple—to win the war and free the enslaved people of Europe for a better, if at present an entirely vague, world order. The tradition of "up and at 'em" (with not too much emphasis on finishing the game of bowls first), would go down very well. *The Sea Hawk* is much more uneasy, for it rakes over the embers of our pre-war years; it should have been shown twelve months ago. To-day, it is ideologically, as well as filmically, a costume (or period) piece.

FILMING IN SCOTLAND

NEVER HAVE I heard such a hard, dry toneless clatter bang, no—the "N" in "bang" makes it too sweet a word for defining the Glasgow tramcar and cobble. Seen in retrospect there is a harshness in the nature of the thing which you won't find anywhere else anywhere. And yet, it was so nice around Dunure and I often felt how good the country was. The Scottish landscape is much tidier than the English and they farm ever so much better. You don't see all those unkempt hedges which restrict your view from one field to another. There're less hedges hence more expanse and roll. There is not that hairy derelict look about the ground anywhere, and nothing like the amount of dock, nettle and thistle you get all over England. Maybe it's the sheep. You find them caretaking everywhere, and maybe what they don't eat they tread down, and they keep the sides of the roads beautifully neat and seldom get in front of the car.

I was asked to write about filming in war-time but I don't see how really. Because film-making is film-making and even if war conditions do have their own peculiar type of reactions on people with cameras, the people who make the difficulties are pretty well the same people who make the difficulties in peace-time too, if they happen to have that modicum of authority which places them that one remove above the rest. Well, they got in the way a lot, but the actual Chief Coppers and O.C.'s were easy as pie and always helpful, always and without exception. And sometimes the specimen called "man in the street" saw our camera and circled round wild-eyed at the chance of knocking off a German, but not quite knowing how to start. After all, a parachutist wouldn't set up a camera in front of a war factory without some kind of official sanction. And yet I met a shepherd who was a real natural, as natural and as absolute as hill and heather, and yet his sensitivity was such that speech became so obvious as to be almost unnecessary. When it was required of him the talk came out in a quiet flowing lilt which had a slight resemblance to English, and when we first called at his cottage one rainy day his wife took us in and without asking who we were started to boil eggs, make tea and put out all the bread, jam, scones and cake she could find in the larder. I'm glad Scotsmen differ so much—it shows they are subject to influences; perhaps they are so sensitive that they have reacted more emphatically to industrialism or the nostalgia of the mountain mist than we Southerners have. To one, like myself, brand new to Scotland, this emphasis was devastating to my usual approach towards what I thought to be everyday humans. I had to readjust myself and quick, but by the time I had readjusted the shooting was over and we had to get back, which was a pity as I was just beginning to enjoy Scotland and to get the first faint glimmer as to what Scotland might be in spite of wars, Sauchiehall Street, films, me or anything else.

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TWENTY YEARS OF SOVIET FILM

By IVOR MONTAGU. Abridged and reprinted by courtesy of *The Anglo Soviet Journal*

THE SOVIET cinema celebrated its twentieth anniversary at the beginning of this year. The decree nationalising the film industry was signed by Lenin at the end of August, 1919.

Pre-revolutionary Russia had a small-scale film production, with one or two magnates and a few pretty stars. With the October Revolution these decamped to Berlin and Paris—with rare exceptions. In the hectic first months there was virtually no production, and cinemas were "municipalised", or subjected to a sort of syndicalised staff control system.

Cinemas "made do" by running and re-running the features already in the country; new production was confined to newsreels and short agitational pieces consisting of news and titles.

The newsreel cameraman was a figure on every front of the civil and interventionist wars. He not only had to photograph, he had—when need arose—to lay down his camera and shoot with rifle instead.

Film stock was as rare as ammunition. Eduard Tisse, the brilliant cameraman of all the Eisenstein pictures, has described the anxiety of such an experience as having only 100 feet of film with which to record the first May Day demonstration in the Red Square, Lenin's speech and all included.

It was indeed not until 1922–1923 that the first feature films could be, and were, produced. The first immediately successful one was called *The Two Little Red Devils*, and dealt with the adventures of two boys, befriended by a Negro in the French interventionist armies in South Russia during the period when the territory was constantly changing hands.

To the material lack of these days Poudovkin has attributed the subsequent ingenuity of Soviet cinema: "While film people abroad were so busy earning their living that they went from film to film (when they could), sometimes even accepting a script they had not themselves prepared and leaving the previous film to stranger hands to cut, and had no time to reflect and experiment regarding the nature of film, the Soviet film technician, having no film stock and therefore unable to shoot, was able to sit down and think out the best methods of shooting when eventually he should get the chance." Thus runs the Poudovkin thesis.

In the year or two immediately following 1922–1923 new films were imported from abroad. The Soviet spectator and technician became familiar with the work of Chaplin, D. W. Griffith, Murnau, and Lubitsch. When, a year or so later, Fairbanks (senior) and Mary Pickford visited U.S.S.R. they found themselves as famous and popular as elsewhere in the world.

The film school G.I.K. (the State Institute of Cinema) was already in being, with its faculties for budding directors, camera men and women, actors and actresses, art directors, etc. Here teacher Kouleshov expounded the gospel of montage, to be inferred, so the lesson ran, from the works of the Americans, and particularly the master, Griffith. One of his most talented pupils was a chemical engineer named Poudovkin.

German expressionism was the chief influence on the brilliant pair, still in their teens, Kozintsev and Trauberg (the elder Trauberg brother, Lev). Two new figures endeavoured from the start to find a style "cinematic", peculiar to cinema independent of the influences of other arts, and deriving not even from previous cinema achievements, but directly from the relation between real phenomena and the cinematographic apparatus. One was Dziga Vertov, with his theory—then stimulating but now seen as naïve—of the "camera eye", viz., that nothing must be arranged, nothing staged; the camera must simply be an eye selecting from, but not otherwise interfering with, the stream of reality. The second was a young architectural student, who had worked in cabaret and circus, Eisenstein, whose lust for realism led him to use "non-acting material" (viz., types selected for their visual correspondence to the external qualities of the desired character rather than for acting ability), into attempting his first film (*Strike*) within the four walls of a real factory instead of building sets.

By 1925 already two works had been produced, *Potemkin* by Eisenstein and *Mother* by Poudovkin, which were to stand out as classic landmarks in the history of the cinema.

The finest leading films of the three years need only to be catalogued to stamp the period. Eisenstein turned out: *October* (*Ten Days that Shook the World*), *Old and New* (*The General Line*); Poudovkin: *The End of St. Petersburg*, *The Heir of Jenghiz Khan* (*Storm over Asia*); Dovzhenko: *Earth;* Kozintsev and Trauberg (turning away from German expressionism to French impressionism): *New Babylon;* Trauberg (the younger brother, Ilya): *Blue Express;* Ermler: *The Stump of an Empire;* Turin: *Turksib;* Room: *No. 3 Meshchanskaya Street* (*Bed and Sofa*).

These were films which proved so effective to any audience, speaking whatever language, that they were paid the ultimate tribute—forbidden, as too effective to be shown—in innumerable countries. They were films which also left an indelible impression on the whole body of world film production that was to come after.

What was the principal technical factor in the style of the old Soviet silent classics which gave them their outstanding influence? This was (blessed word) "montage".

Technically montage is simply the production

of effects by the sticking together of shorter pieces of film into a larger strip. Later there arose in the Soviet film world damaging mechanical conceptions of montage which laid exaggerated or even exclusive emphasis on this technical method of montage. Acting, direction, scenarios hardly mattered, even casually assembled pieces could be so synthesised as to produce the right effect.

The period 1925–1929 was associated no less with a development of the technical basis of the cinema. The U.S.S.R. is a very big country and many nationalities reside in it. To make a film accessible to the whole country enormous numbers of screens had to be organised. Films also had to be translated into many languages. Soviet films, for internal consumption alone, had to be titled in more than eighty different languages.

The Third Five-Year Plan involves the disappearance of all silent screens and the increase of sound projection units more than six times, from 9,000 in 1937 to 60,000 in 1940 (exclusive of those in schools and other places not open to the general public). The network in the countryside will increase 1,108 per cent: 50,000 standard and 40,000 sub-standard sound projectors, with 35,000 electrical generating apparatus for portable work, will be produced during the Third Five-Year Plan, or to express it another way, accommodation for spectators (calculated on a basis of annual occupation of seats)—which rose as follows: 1928, 310 million; 1936, 710 million; 1939, 950 million—will increase to 2,700 million (45 per cent instead of as now 30 per cent in the countryside) by 1,942.

The building of this giant industry has not been achieved without serious creative crises in the early stages. It is now generally realised in the outside world that the industrialisation and collectivisation of the first and early second Five-Year Plan periods represented an upheaval in the lives of the people that could only be described as a second revolution, in some respects even more severe, more far-reaching.

The period of flowering of the classic silent Soviet cinema was followed by a period of almost complete collapse, a barren period in which films of quality were rare, almost accidents, a period from which creative film production had almost to be rebuilt anew.

The only notable examples among early sound films were *The Road to Life* (Ekk), made partly under non-Soviet inspiration; *Enthusiasm*, a novelty, but a blind alley; and *Counterplan*, an impressive but ponderous study on a theme then vitally important, by Yutkevicj and Ermler.

Poudovkin botched, and many of the masters held aloof, found excuses in the long and profound research into projected subjects which has always been a prerogative of Soviet artists, and left the field to those who were less self-important but, alas, less gifted.

What were the causes of this interregnum? They are not listed here in relative importance, but simply jotted down as factors contributing.

1. The technical shortage. Soviet manufactured film stock in its initial stages was of course undependable. Cameramen found their exposure a matter of hazard, not knowing the speed of the stock. Laboratory work was clumsy.

2. The sound position. Even before it was in general use abroad Soviet film directors eagerly welcomed sound, and described what they would do with it, thirsted after it. But sound was not available in the U.S.S.R. until long after it came into use abroad. It is not easy to transform a section of so mighty a plan of reconstruction and development of the film industry, plotted before sound, to include a technical device that turns the whole business topsy-turvy and comes in just after your plan (for five years) has already been set in motion.

3. Isolation. Shortage of valuta restricted, nearly eliminated, import of films from abroad during the First Five-Year Plan. Denied the opportunity of comparison, young Soviet film technicians developed exaggerated ideas of the qualities of their own still imperfect films, and the vain old veterans became unnecessarily critical of these imperfections, and still more terrified of taking the plunge on to the studio floor.

4. Alienation from subject. Herein lay the social roots of formalism. The oldest masters were men with minds formed before the October Revolution. The early revolutionary themes inspired them. The themes of the reconstruction period, the matters that engrossed 170 million of their fellow-citizens in the period of the First Five-Year Plan, could not be felt by them directly but only indirectly. What can it mean to a man who has never worked in a factory that some new machine or new process has lightened labour? What can a new separator mean to a man who has never had the task of separating milk by hand? The new themes, intensely dramatic for their audiences, became for the masters only the subject for a formal exercise in presentation.

5. The montage theory. The speaking figure on the screen is more individual, less symbolic, than the silent figure. Prosperity brings opportunity of self-expression, development, and attention to individuals. The narrow, mechanical conception of montage as a synthesis only in the cutting process, was unfitted to cope with the problem of expressing personality. The extremist theories of the "camera eye" and "non-acting actor" type, instead of being a fertile means of obtaining new effects became simply a fetter restraining the film creator from using every available resource, and limiting him to a certain class only.

Then, just about as far away in time from the start of Soviet sound film as *Potemkin* had been from the start of Soviet silent films, came *Chapayev* (by the brothers Vasiliev), equally historic, because masterfully solving (to the overwhelming satisfaction of its Russian-speaking audiences) the problem of the expression of personality in film. That is to say, a realistic, "all-round" expression; not just in the Western sense of drawing out the high-powered personality of a star, but the acting, the depiction of a personality in relation to the social forces developing around him.

At this decisive stage the weight of the Communist Party's influence and authority firmly directed attention towards clear statement of content rather than the form it was set in.

The picture held as exemplary was not Ermler's able *Peasants* nor Dziga Vertov's moving swan-song *Three Songs of Lenin*, nor the pictorially beautiful *We from Kronstadt* of Dzigan, but a simple, formless, naturalistic narrative of treachery and sabotage: *The Party Card*.

The line of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in this controversy should be clearly understood. The Party was perfectly well aware that, as a writer said during the Writers' Conference that discussed realism and formalism: "There can be something worse than formalism in art, and that is—no form at all." The Party was perfectly well aware that realism, the presentation by art to the spectator of an impression corresponding to reality, is a constructed, formed effect, and not an automatic sequel to mere naturalism.

But, as Lenin once explained, the Bolshevik method is to decide which link in the chain is the one that needs to be hauled on at the particular moment and then, for the time, concentrate all forces on hauling on it. This carries the obvious corollary that the risk is run of overlooking difficulties which may arise out of the connection with the other links, and it is necessary to be continually alert to notice in time when one link begins to grow and transcend another in importance in the course of developing relations. At the time of the controversy excessive naturalism was not the danger, formalism was. Formalism made rotten and vitiated the usefulness of some of the finest talent, so that the creation risked ceasing to be a communication. Naturalism was the weakness only of the untalented, and could easily be corrected later.

Climax occurred when, rare event in Soviet life, the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. made time to see Eisenstein's current opus (still unfinished after millions of roubles' expenditure, and two years' work, and one re-writing half-way through), *Bezhin Meadow*. The Central Committee decided it should be junked.

The film technicians' organisation was invited to condemn it. They insisted on seeing it first. They saw it. Followed a conference, during which for days Eisenstein stubbornly defended his viewpoint, at last yielded and conceded the principal and most generally held criticisms of his colleagues. Eisenstein was "punished" by being given a long holiday in the Crimea, the best scenarist, composer, and assistant director in the U.S.S.R., and unlimited resources as soon as he had chosen, and was ready to start on, his next subject.

The battle was won. A fertile period followed synchronising with the present great growth of prosperity, and with it general enjoyment of the arts, in the U.S.S.R. Eisenstein's own next picture was a triumphant, popular success, and the film world turned its attention to smoothing out the excesses of naturalism, and did so in its stride, by the simple process of raising the general technical ("film cultural") level.

This zigzag method of progress, characteristic of the Soviet Union, may be hectic, but it usually gets ahead faster than the alternative of sitting looking at the chain, not hauling on anything at all, and arguing about the exact volume of the forces that should be applied simultaneously to all the various links.

DOCUMENTARY FILM REVIEWS

Men of the Lightship. *Production:* Alberto Cavalcanti. *Direction:* David Macdonald. *Distribution*: A.B.F.D. 23 minutes.

By a Film Fan

THIS is the third and last epic documentary that Cavalcanti has produced for the G.P.O. He is now at Ealing. Like its predecessors *North Sea* and *Squadron* 992, *Men of the Lightship* is a success. In its first month it had a vast number of bookings and the audiences lapped it up.

It is difficult now to review films in terms of direction, photography, production and æsthetic results. *Men of the Lightship* is a good film; it is well made; it has everything that Cavalcanti and the G.P.O. Film Unit can give to a documentary film or real film or anything you like to call a film about real people doing real things.

I saw it at the Odeon on Saturday night and I have seldom seen a short get so much applause. There were four bursts through the film and at the end the clapping went on until the next titles were on the screen.

It says a lot for the film but it says more, it says that we want to see films that show what is going on. We want to see the reasons why we have to live in the dark; why we suddenly stop talking and say "Did you hear that?"

During the last year we have seen a few films which are supposed to be about the war. The features using the war as just another background for the same old story. We have seen their unenthusiastic reception in the cinemas.

We have seen the Ministry of Information films. Their booking lists were longer than any, but only because they were free and were shown by courtesy of the film trade.

The antigossip shorts—phoney films about phoney people. We do not want to see a twerp in a Mayfair bar as a representative of us.

A Call to Arms—two floozies from a sheebang, calling who to arms—to their arms but certainly to no one else's.

Sea Fort.—Nearer the right line, but missing as badly as the others. We do not want soldiers' dreams of action, and real films do not mean indiscriminate slapping together of odd shots with a prissy commentary.

Miss Grant goes to the Window. Perhaps the only near successful one of the bunch. It is about a middle-class woman and deals faithfully with her and we accept it for that reason.

The commercial producers can do as they want, but the Ministry of Information can't. Through all their productions there has been a consistent disregard both of the people they are supposed to be about and the people they are for. The films seem to have been made by an isolated few who, superior and secure in their tall white Bloomsbury castle, forget that they are using our money to insult us.

We do not want to see the war through Charlies, and floozies. This time we want the real M'Coy, the war is too close and too personal for it to be translated in the present terms of the Ministry of Information.

We want more of *Squadron* 992, *Men of the Lightship* and less of *Call to Arms* and *Sea Forts.*

Airscrew. *Production:* Arthur Elton. *Direction:* Grahame Tharp. *Diagrams:* Francis Rödker. *Photography:* Sidney Beadle. 20 mins. *Distribution:* Petroleum Films Bureau.

By an Aeronautical Engineer

THIS film falls into two parts, the first showing the making of an airscrew, from the metallurgists inspection of the raw material to the final checking of the finished article by the A.I.D. (Aircraft Inspection Department). The second explains the need for variable pitch airscrews and shows the mechanism of a well-known type. The film has been shot in the actual factories, and is interleaved with explanatory diagrams.

The first part gives a clear-cut picture not only of the production of an airscrew blade but of the spirit of modern precision engineering. Nowhere is there the taint of "whang-bar worship", the adoration of incomprehensible complication for its own sake (*Cf.* the theatrical film's conception of a "scientific laboratory"). The subject is ideal. Everyone knows what an airscrew is for and what it looks like. It is a simple lump of metal—at least, the type shown is—so it is possible to follow its progress from forging to stockroom without interruption by the appearance of components down tributary streams of production. Finally, it has a characteristic and beautiful shape that can never be confused with the machines operating on it. The producers have risen to the opportunity and their austere treatment echoes the clarity and accuracy of the craftsmanship of their subject.

The second part, showing the variable pitch control gear, raises greater difficulties. It involves far too many principles from many branches of science to be explained in the time available without over-simplification and inaccuracy. The mechanism itself, although simple enough in principle, is complicated in practice, looking like a three-dimensional maze. The film keeps to essentials, explaining what a variable pitch airscrew is for, what it looks like and how it is used. First is shown the connection between change of pitch of the airscrew and change of gear in a motor car. The mechanical linkage that changes the pitch in flight is shown in actuality and in diagram. The automatic variation of the pitch with engine speed is stated as a fact, no attempt being made at the necessarily loose explanation that is the only alternative. Some very clear shots show the working of the gear in flight.

The whole film gives one the impression of being made from the inside, not from the outside by a talented director who has carefully studied his brief but no more. Commentary is used sparingly; it is possible to watch the screen without constant verbal nudging. There is, in fact, a greater emphasis on pictorial values than is usual in films of this kind, so many of which seem to be planned by experts on radio talks. The play of light on polished metal is used with the delight shown by the cameramen of old silent films, but its effect is intensified by the rigid discipline of the subject. After each one of the many surface treatments the blade undergoes, the texture of metal shows the nature of the treatment as clearly as do the pictures of the actual processing.

Photography of this quality is unfair to the animated diagrams that follow it without break in continuity. So long as the diagrams are still they match the photographs perfectly, being in continuous tones and in perspective. When they start moving the inevitable quavering of outline is emphasised by the comparison. To attempt to animate shaded drawings of bevel gears and sleeve cams, moving slowly, is to attempt to transcend the limits of the cinematographic process. It is not possible to draw the pictures accurately enough to avoid slight quavering and this is damaging in representations of essentially rigid materials. The style of *Felix the Cat* (i.e., the style of a blue print) would have been as appropriate, and more successful, than the style of *Pinnocchio*. To sum up: *Airscrew* sets a new standard for engineering films as *Aero Engine* did in its day. It is a film that will be enjoyed by layman and engineer alike.

What's for Dinner, Green Food for Health, Choose Cheese. *Production:* Realist Film Unit. *Producer:* John Taylor. *Direction:* Ruby Grierson. *Camera:* A. E. Jeakins. *Distribution;* Non-T. 10 min., 5 min., 5 min. respectively.

THESE THREE films are a contribution to the National Effort by the British Commercial Gas Association. Their object is to put across certain vital points regarding what foods to eat and how to cook them. This means (*a*) How to get the maximum nutrition from home grown foods and (*b*) how to make rationed foods go as far as possible. Of the three, *Choose Cheese* is the most straightforward and practical. It makes its points economically and cogently, and is distinguished by a shot of a steaming dish of cauliflower au gratin which makes the mouth water. *Green Food for Health* and *What's for Dinner* attempt a trickier technique—the putting across of important points by means of comedy. To this end Archie Harradine and Joan Sterndale Bennett (both of the Player's Theatre) have been recruited with great effect. In *What's for Dinner* the trick effects are exceedingly funny, and the gag of moving the characters about to

the commentator's orders is done as well as Pete Smith does it. Nor does the delightful appearance of Archie Harradine as a surrealist paper-hanger clash with the film's piquant message on the value of casserole cookery.

Green Food for Health is less successful, probably because a comedy scene (of a family suffering from colds, dyspepsia, acidity and ill-temper through wrong feeding) intrudes rather unexpectedly on the more straightforward descriptive style of the rest of the film.

Long Live Poland! Time: 108 minutes, accompanied throughout by Polish commentary. Produced by the Polish American Film Corporation, of Chicago, and featuring the activities of Polish soldiers in France.

DOCUMENTARY is hardly the word I would employ in describing this full-length film showing Poland, briefly, before the invasion, and after when they formed their army in France. It is rather a series of newsreel shots strung together, in more or less cohesion. The film opens with scenes of peasants in peace-time digging up the potato crop; which later was to be swallowed up by the German troops. From the broad streets of Warsaw, that gay and dignified city of modern Poland, we travel to Kracow, which is a poem of medieval loveliness: then suddenly, the bombers come, bringing destruction to life and building, and Warsaw is a shambles. The people that escape do not give up hope, they come, weary and grim in a continuous stream into France, where they train to become soldiers and nurses again. (There is created in France a little Poland, where everybody is eager to continue the battle on foreign soil.) There are more scenes of activity in France showing General Sigorski, Paderewski, and Mme Biddle taking part in some interesting events. The film finishes with scenes of Paris taken only two days before the Germans entered the city. Though undoubtedly this film was made with the utmost sincerity, the direction is dull and the photography indifferent; except for one sequence of Polish soldiers billeted in a French chateau where the photography is excellent and for the first time the people on the screen really live. The smiling faces and efficiency of the young Poles is impressive. The film runs for 108 minutes and it would be much more vital and interesting if it were cut to 30 minutes, particularly those interminable speeches with only the news camera men wiggling in and out of the Ministers' legs to break the monotony.

Flying to Australia with Ivan Scott. *Production:* Spectator. *Producer:* Ivan Scott. *Distribution:* Denning. 10 minutes.

THE job of the maker of travel films is becoming increasingly difficult unless he has plenty of time to spend in the places which he visits. The indefatigable Fitzpatrick has made the world look a lot less exciting than the next door neighbour's garden; Movietone, before folding up their Magic Carpet, managed to float around in a very thorough way and Universal have given us many, many glimpses of the more exotic pursuits of the peoples of the world which, alas, seem so often to be connected with snakes. The more accessible parts of the earth's surface have been only too well covered. There have been some memorable films of strange places but these have not, strictly speaking, been travel films; only World Window, bringing colour and superb shooting to ruin and palace, has made travel films that one can remember.

When the travel film maker travels by air his job is even more difficult. Breakfast at Basra or Bucharest, lunch at Baghdad or Damascus and in between, the oft-repeated shot of the Temple or the pilots lighting cigarettes. Then on across the usually shark-infested sea to the picturesque water market and the Chinese junk.

In this film, *Flying to Australia with Ivan Scott*, Mr. Scott takes us across the world by K.L.M. (Incidentally there seems to be some ambiguity in the title. It appears that the film was taken by a cameraman working without a director. In the absence of any credit titles it is difficult to know who exactly did make it.) The film was shot in Dufaycolour. This is particularly good in the shots of the countries taken from the air. The hazy patterns of green fields, blue sea or golden desert are extremely successful and a great improvement on the usual rather flat shots in black and white. The cameraman has also taken advantage of the colour to do full justice to the glistening aeroplanes, silver blue against a deep blue sky.

The film ambles along the well-known route pleasantly enough and, receiving no assistance from the sound track, takes us safely to Sydney.

The U.S. Navy. *Production:* March of Time (No. 4, Sixth Year). *Distribution:* R.K.O. Radio. 18 minutes.
By a Producer

YEARS AGO the March of Time stories did take, within their journalistic limits, a sincere and courageous line. We had not only a story, sometimes but not necessarily sensational, but a definite attitude to it. In those days March of Time used to get cheers from the audience and trouble from the censors. Now, I cannot imagine audience or censors getting any sort of reaction from it: like other organisations a good deal nearer home, it feels the necessity to keep on talking, in as loud a voice as possible, without committing the cardinal error of ever saying anything. Its a great pity, for we need plain statements from somewhere, and we used to get them from the March of Time.

However, if they find that they cannot bring themselves to say anything, they will need to revise their technique pretty radically if they're going to keep up their circulation. *The U.S. Navy* contains no material that we haven't already seen in newsreels, or seem to have, and there are no synchronised sequences to brighten it up. More human material, with plenty of dialogue, might help these latter-day issues to get by. As it is, *The U.S. Navy* smells very strongly of war-jitters. The main idea seems to be to find some sort of a scapegoat for the supposed present inadequacy of their navy, and in this role we rather surprisingly find cast the 1922 Washington Conference, which cut down all naval building programmes. I should have thought past Isolationism towards Europe and conciliation of big-business interests towards Japan would have filled the role better. Exception might also be taken to the tacit assumption of the disappearance of the British Navy implied by the comparison of Axis (Japan-Germany-Italy) and U.S.A. tonnage, which even so at this moment discounting future Axis losses and American building, leaves the U.S.A. at a disadvantage of only 17 to 21. Another of their worries seems to be the Panama Canal, "For if the locks were attacked and rendered useless, the U.S. Navy might be stranded in one ocean, leaving the other ocean defenceless to the enemy." Not very flattering to us!

Well, there's the choice. They can either change their technique, or make their arguments clear and honest once more. The present unhappy condition is merely boring.

Transport on Trial. *Production:* Spectator. *Distribution:* Denning. 18 minutes.

THIS NEW EDITION in the "Point of View" series argues the case for and against the unification, through State control, of the country's entire transport industry. The fundamentals of the problem are quickly put—chaos on the roads, complaints by the railway companies of unfair competition, high fares, poor services, low wages. Mr. Pro and Mr. Con then argue their respective views, with Ivan Scott endeavouring to do a neat balancing act in the chair.

The advocate for nationalisation makes out an extremely good case—such a good case that his opponent is reduced to citing the love of children for model railways as a reason for retaining the present system and leaving it all to the railway companies. In fact he is on such poor ground that he forgets even to put forward the usual arguments for private ownership, and flounders about in a most unconvincing manner.

Unlike one or two recent films in the "Point of View" series, the visuals are extremely pertinent to the quickly-changing discourse on the sound track, and the film succeeds in giving a comprehensive survey of all forms of transportation, and their inter-connection.

Photography, music and diagrams are excellent. Altogether, a thoroughly interesting contribution to a question which affects the entire population.

Britain's Youth. *Production:* Strand Films. *Producer:* Alexander Shaw. *Direction:* Jack Ellit. 11 minutes.

YET ANOTHER competent and practical Fitness Film which relates closely to the War Effort, and is remarkable for a commentary written and spoken by C. B. Fry. It is well photographed and cut, but does not merit any more elaborate comment.

LESS PROPAGANDA, MORE PEP

By "SEVORG"

THE CINEMA has reached a critical point in its development. Depending upon exhibition of its products in thousands of cinemas, and upon the weekly patronage of millions of people, it is in danger of ceasing to cater for those millions, of seeing them turn silently away from its doors and drop their pennies and nickels into the coffers of other amusements.

Catering for millions, the cinema developed a vitality, a vigour and a character of its own; this alone made possible its rise to dominant position in the world of entertainment and its growth into becoming one of America's largest industries.

Once it ceases to cater for the masses, the movie—the most democratic form of entertainment in history—is in danger of becoming lifeless and sterile; as lifeless and as sterile as the B.B.C. programmes have become under the stern control of moralists and would-be dispensers of culture to the masses; as uninspired and as tepid as the present-day British theatre; as vital and as interesting to ordinary people as a symphony concert.

The cinema began in the gutter. Though it began its rise only some fifty years ago there is already dispute over origins. It will never be clear who was responsible for all the early inventions which made possible the taking and projection of the moving picture; its inventors were, for the most part, obscure, embittered men whose efforts were regarded by relatives and friends as attempts to avoid making an honest living. Many of them must have come from the photographer class; pictures of those early adventurers—who haunted beaches, public houses and parks—show them to be either misfits and cranks, or persuasive confidence men engaged in selling gold-bricks to suckers.

It was in the hands of down-at-heel and despised men of this kind that many of the early efforts to take moving pictures began. But even where the inventors were disinterested men of science they were unable to exploit their discoveries for themselves; that is why such men mostly died in poverty after seeing others enriched by their early work. The exploitation fell into the hands, mainly, of showmen and music-hall managers. Illiterate, vain, brass-lunged, rough-hewn, these men boosted the new sensation throughout the length and breadth of Britain and America.

The film began its career at the tail-end of music-hall programmes, in fair-ground booths and in peep-show stands. The kind of reputation it thus gained for itself can best be gauged today by inviting a clergyman to look through the shutters of any penny peep-show in a pin-table amusement saloon.

Showmen, music-hall managers, and barkers brought the film to the people. Much the same type of man began making film, once the early novelty of showing actual events had begun to wear. The simple rule-of-thumb standard for such people was—would it go down with the public; not the middle-classes, but the back streets, the slums, the labouring classes and the artisans whose likes and dislikes could be gauged by their attendances at the music-hall, then in its heyday, and in the touring stock companies with their melodramas of the "Maria Marten" type. It was this attempt to make films the masses wanted to see that enabled the movies to rise above all the other forms of entertainment; to produce an art unequalled for vigour and crudity since the days of the playhouses adjoining the whore-houses and stews of Bankside.

This development along the lines of popular taste was all the more easily accomplished because Governments, propagandists, preachers and middle-class intellectuals failed to see the great possibilities of this new entertainment. The dirty, cheap-priced, dark little halls, crowded with children, with servant girls, with labourers, were regarded with horror by the righteous and with contempt by the highbrows. The middle-class advance-guard thinkers were too busy emptying the theatres by turning them into debating clubs to notice the cinema; which in any case would not suit them so long as everybody could go in for a few pence.

As showmen grew rich from the proceeds they often began to exhibit signs of dislike for the disrepute into which the movies had fallen and remained, and began to try to earn respectability. These efforts, however, were soon corrected when the takings showed a fall. The clinging to stage technique and acting went overboard because of the silent pressure of the box office, as did efforts to turn "great stage plays" into films and to film "great actors" in these plays. Cinemagoers with their pennies forced the movie makers along the road to greatness, forced the development of a film technique. The most striking evidence of the rightness of popular taste was the rise of Charlie Chaplin; to-day he has been worshipped into paralysis by the intellectuals, but he was made famous and great by the pennies and twopences of the uneducated and uncultured poor at a time when these self-same intellectuals were decrying the movies and Chaplin as "vulgar".

Another example of the failure of the cultured to realise the power and importance of the cinema, is shown by the indifference—at the time of his greatness—to Griffiths. He was one of the great figures of the silent screen. His outstanding developments in movie technique were, some fifteen years later, taken over by the Russians, Griffiths passed unnoticed by the advance guard; but the Russians were worshipped, though the technical achievements for which they were acclaimed had all been used to the full by Griffiths and enjoyed by movie-goers fifteen years before. So, throughout the silent era one finds the pressure of popular taste and demand creating the movies, and making them into one of the greatest of all mass entertainments.

All this is passed and forgotten to-day. The film industry has grown. There is much money to be made and reputation to be won. Those who despised it now seek entrance to its portals. The back street cinema has given way to the luxury super and the prices of seats has risen accordingly. A new public has come into the cinema, and around it a host of film-doctors, advisers, preachers, propagandists and theorists have assembled. Governments have found its value as propaganda. The results are beginning to show in the loss of vitality in the present-day cinema. The film critics of to-day have been recruited from the Film Societies of yesterday and reflect a corresponding namby-pamby attitude to life.

Censorship, politics—both left and right—and increasing catering for a middle-class public has devitalised the movies. A glance at the films of to-day will show that.

Crook films are now scripted by policeman; outlaws are shown with abject apology; the films of plays by Bernard Shaw are hailed as "great" even though nobody moves during the whole film from one end of a room to the other. Processions of Queen Victorias, and suitably ironed-out suburbanised Victorian statesmen, move drearily across the screen for hours on end to the delight of snobbish suburbia and the nodding approval of schoolmasters who still feel a little wicked at being seen in a cinema. These are signs of the change. Some may think it a change for the better, but there can be no doubt that, sooner or later, the box office in the provincial cinemas will spell out the letters R-U-I-N to the industry unless it is checked.

Great movie art and popular taste are not opposites but complementary. Governments can subsidise the distribution of milk without affecting the taste of milk—people either like it or they don't. But popular opinion can express itself about entertainment only if it is here to go to it or stop away. Along lines of catering for popular tastes the movies can live; along the lines of deliberate art-creation and propaganda it is doomed, as the theatre, to become the preserve of a minority.

PIN-TABLE POLITICS

By A DAMON RUNYON FAN

PIN TABLES is no spare-time occupation, and I am giving one the Go To It with both hands and feet when Movie Mike comes the hello and how are you over my shoulder.

Mike has been going to the movies since he was old enough to reach up to his mother's purse on the kitchen mantelpiece, and as he goes only to westerns and gangster epics he has a left known in pin-table circles as the humane killer. So naturally I am polite and respond to Mike's suggestion that I give my views on the war and the conduct of the belligerent nations.

I am not a guy who goes around much but it happens one night I am in one of those towns it is careless talk to mention the name of, when some guys let off some hooters. Now I wish to say I do not like to spend the night alone with a strange siren so I make for a shelter, stopping only to select myself a book. I gets one called *Guilty Men* and it is not till I am well and truly comfortable that I find it is not a crime book but a political yell.

It is such as I remember of this book that I give out in chunks to Mike feeling sure that he has not read a book since they stopped the Racing Almanac.

"By all accounts," I says, "we are not doing well. We give in to Hitler for many years, and then when we have no more to give away we are in a war fitted out with bows and arrows. Though I am a fall guy for pin tables I could not hold my position in the pin-table world if I am failing all the time. But these political guys who do the wrong thing still get away with it and I am in favour of demoting them to the ranks. Appeasement," I say, "is . . ."

"Appeasement," says Mike getting all sored up, "I am sick of hearing that guy's name. He must have one good publicity guy for not one day goes past but I am reading his name in the papers. Why pick on him to blame—or maybe it is to throw a dummy so that no one is to know the truth."

"What is the truth," I ask, not that I wish to hear, the world being full of guys who will give you how to win the war all the time and any time, but not wishing to get Mike all upset.

"Well," says Mike, "since horse-racing is stopped I am putting my mind on the political racket though as far as I can see there is no money in it, all of the graft having been got long ago. What is wrong I wish to say is our Government do not go to the movies."

It is clear Mike is in a gabby mood, so I venture at this point to make some correction. "I seem to remember," I says, "that Mr Korda never has a show but all our politicians are present."

"When I say movies," says Mike, "I do not mean illustrated Boys' Own Papers but movies, and I exclude from such all British films. Indeed I argue that too many of our Cabinet men try to fight the war like it is a British film script, and it is to be expected that this would make things very easy for Hitler, who does not know of these scripts anyway."

"I am no Vernon Bartlett," says Mike "but I am familiar through my many years at gangster epics with the peace conference idea. When the mobsters get together to split up the territory one and all know that this arrangement is only to be kept while convenient. Such things as Munich happen in Chicago but no one there is dumb enough to regard them as anything but playing for time. I know that mobsters fight each other but always team up against the cops, and I am not surprised when Stalin and Hitler join together though everyone else is. I am no General Ironside, but I am not surprised to hear of the petrol tanks in Nazi planes that seal up when hit by a bullet because I am aware that Al Capone had this idea many years ago for dealing with stray copper bullets at the back tyres of his armoured cars. I am not so foolish as to fight Tommy Guns with bayonets because many a time I see great work done with Tommy Guns by mobsters in the movies. I am no Duff Cooper, but I am not taken unawares by the Fifth Column idea because I know from my movies that gangsters rely on grafting politicians to protect them from the cops."

"It is no use," says Mike sadly, "sending these men to the movies now. It is a life study and starts in the nursery. I am sure that we cannot do any good until men who have spent their lives in the study of the gangster epic, like Warner Brothers, are taking over the national war effort."

"Now," says Mike, "what is the winning score on this pin-table?"

NOTES AND NEWS

London. The London Scientific Film Society will begin its third season in October. Prospective members should get in touch with the Secretary, 30 Bedford Row, London, W.C.1.

Canada. The National Film Society, the Home and School Association of Ontario and Shell Oil are combining in an attempt to enlist the support of parents and teachers for "education-by-films". It is stated that there is a great demand for such shows and that in Ontario alone audiences will total as many as 30,000. In addition the National Film Society states that more and more films are becoming available for this purpose. It is claimed that 1,341 reels have been shown to audiences of approximately 180,000 people during the past season and they have 128 films in their own library. This has given the impetus to many Canadian schools to start their own film libraries.

South Africa. The National Bureau of Educational and Social Research, Union Education Department, is an exceptionally active organisation. This Bureau maintains a national film library, membership of which is open to schools, universities, technical colleges, social welfare societies, scientific societies, departments of public healths, Sunday schools and other recognised educational and social welfare groups.

British East Africa. At present there is no showing of 16 mm. films for educational motion pictures in the schools of this territory. But, during the last year, the Departments of Education of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika as well as some of the more advanced schools have been studying the problem and making inquiries.

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DOCUMENTARY BOOKINGS FOR SEPTEMBER

(The following bookings for September are selected from a list covering its members supplied by the News and Specialised Theatres Association.)

Adventures of Chico
Classic Cinema, Upper Tooting Rd., S.W.17 (3 days) 19th
A Boy, a Girl and Birds
Tatlers News Reel Cinema, Newcastle 21st
Arabian Bazaar
Premier News Theatre, 2 Albert Rd., Bournemouth 7th
American Youth
World's News Theatre, Praed Street, Edgware Road, W.2 (4 days) 12th
Tatlers News Theatre, 25 Church St., Liverpool (6 days) 9th
Beat of the Drums
World's News Theatre, Praed Street, Edgware Road, W. 2 (3 days) 9th
Border Collie
News Theatre, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne 14th
Colourful Curacao
Classic Cinema, Upper Tooting Road, S.W.17 (4 days) 1st
The News House, 92 Upper Parliament St., Nottingham 7th
Charters Great and Small
Tatlers News Reel Cinema, Newcastle 28th
Ducks and Drakes (G.B.C.)
The Little Theatre, Bath 14th
Tatlers News Theatre, 25 Church Street, Liverpool (6 days) 2nd
Delhi
News Theatre, High Street, 4, Birmingham 7th
Tatlers News Theatre, 25 Church Street, Liverpool (6 days) 23rd
Dangerous Comments
Tatlers News Theatre, 25 Church Street, Liverpool (6 days) 2nd
Drunk Driving
Tatlers News Theatre, 25 Church St., Liverpool (6 days) 23rd
Flying to Australia
Classic Cinema, Above Bar, Southampton (4 days) 15th
Fear and Peter Brown
World's News Theatre, Praed Street, Edgware Road, W.2 (3 days) 16th
Fingers and Thumbs
The News House, 92 Upper Parliament Street, Nottingham 14th
Flying Stewardess
Tatlers News Reel Cinema, Newcastle 7th
Flying Targets
Tatlers News Reel Cinema, Newcastle 14th
Fly Casting
Tatlers News Reel Cinema, Newcastle 21st
Gibraltar the First Outpost
Waterloo Station, News Theatre, S.E.1 (4 days) 26th
Gullible Gulls
The News House, 92 Upper Parliament Street, Nottingham 21st
Home Early
News Theatre, Pilgrim St., Newcastle-on-Tyne 7th
Historic Cities of India
News Theatre, Pilgrim St., Newcastle-on-Tyne 14th
How to Eat
Tatlers News Theatre, 25 Church Street, Liverpool 30th
How to Eat
Tatler Theatre, Oxford Street, Manchester 28th
Human Fish
The News Theatre, Peter Street, Bristol 28th
How to Eat
News Theatre, City Road, 1, Leeds 28th
Men of the Lightship
Classic Cinema, Upper Tooting Road, S.W.17 (4 days) 22nd
March of Time No. 3
Premier News Theatre, 2 Albert Rd., Bournemouth 21st
Men of the Lightship
Tatler Theatre, Oxford Street, Manchester 14th
March of Time No. 3
Tatler Theatre, Oxford Street, Manchester 21st
Men of the Lightship
The News Theatre, Peter Street, Bristol 7th
Money Makers of Manhattan
Tatler Theatre, Station Road, Birmingham 28th
March of Time No. 13
The Little Theatre, Bath 7th
March of Time No. 1 (New Series)
The News Cinema, Diamond Street, Aberdeen 7th
Men in Danger
The News Cinema, Diamond Street, Aberdeen 14th
March of Time No. 2
Classic Cinema, S. Croydon, London (3 days) 26th
March of Time No. 3
World's News Theatre, Praed Street, Edgware Road, W.2 (4 days) 12th
March of Time No. 4
Victoria Station News Theatre, S.W.1 (7 days) 2nd
Men of Africa
Victoria Station News Theatre, S.W.1 (3 days) 16th
March of Time No. 5
Victoria Station News Theatre, S.W.1 (7 days) 30th
March of Time No. 4
Waterloo Station News Theatre, S.E.1 (7 days) 2nd
Men of Africa
Waterloo Station News Theatre, S.E.1 (4 days) 12th
Men of the Lightship
Waterloo Station News Theatre, S.E.1 (3 days) 16th
The News House, 92 Upper Parliament Street, Nottingham 28th
Tatlers News Reel Cinema, Newcastle 28th
March of Time No. 5 (Bill Posters)
Eros News Theatre, Piccadilly, W.1 (7 days) 30th
March of Time No. 5
Waterloo Station, News Theatre, S.E.1 (7 days) 30th
Men of Glasket
News Theatre, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne 7th
March of Time No. 3 (Sixth Year)
News Theatre, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne 21st
Men of the Lightship
News Theatre, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne 28th
Point of View No. 6
Waterloo Station News Theatre, S.E.1 (4 days) 19th
Point of View No. 7
Tatler Theatre, Oxford Street, Manchester 28th
Profit without Honour
Classic Cinema, Above Bar, Southampton (4 days) 8th
Paradise of the Pacific
News Theatre, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne 7th
Picturesque Udaipur
News Theatre, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne 21st
Pleasure Isle
News Theatre, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne 28th
Quaint St. Augustine
Tatler Theatre, Oxford Street, Manchester 7th
News Theatre, City Road, 1, Leeds 7th
Ruins of Palmyra
The News Theatre, Peter Street, Bristol 7th
Roof of the World
News Theatre, High Street, 4, Birmingham 14th
Ruins of Palmyra
News Theatre, City Road, 1, Leeds 14th
River Thames
Classic Cinema, S. Croydon, London (3 days) 5th
Ruins of Palmyra
Classic Cinema, S. Croydon, London (4 days) 29th
Reporter in Soho
The News House, 92 Upper Parliament Street, Nottingham 21st
Ruins of Palmyra
Premier News Theatre, 2 Albert Road, Bournemouth 14th
Unseen Guardians
Eros News Theatre, Piccadilly, W.1 23rd
Tatlers News Theatre, 25 Church Street, Liverpool 16th
Unconquerable Minesweepers
Tatlers News Reel Cinema, Newcastle 7th
Unseen Guardians
News Theatre, High Street, 4, Birmingham 7th
Unveiling Algeria
News Theatre, 16 Oxford Street, Manchester 14th
Valiant Venezuela
News Theatre, City Road, 1, Leeds 28th

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FILM MUSIC

By MUIR MATHIESON

THE ABSENCE in the Documentary film of "big names", of Technicolor, of gigantic publicity campaigns or any of the other devices used to herald the arrival of a "super" film, gives it no superficial appeal to the general public.

For this very reason I believe that music can serve one of its most satisfying and useful purposes in the Cinema in connection with the Documentary, provided that its possibilities are fully utilised.

The absence of these customary trimmings throws the film itself into a more normal perspective; pure sight and sound are entirely dependent on one another to make up the ideal Documentary picture. At the same time, music plays a doubly important part, providing, as it must, a larger share than usual of the entertainment value.

Music can help to humanise the subject, and widen its appeal—an important point at the present moment, when the Documentary is instrumental in supplying propaganda valuable to our war effort. Music can make the film less intellectual and more emotional. It can influence the reaction of the audience to any given sequence.

Witness Walt Disney. The whole tempo and mood of his pictures come, not from Donald Duck's quackings, but from the skilful use of music. This is designed to give comedy, pathos, or what-you-will to his animated cartoons. Immense trouble is taken over this music, and every score is specially written or arranged.

Music for the Documentary must also be specially written. If music is considered necessary it should be treated as an integral part of the script, and the difficult question of finance should not be left to chance or afterthought, but should be settled before shooting begins. A first-class script writer is engaged for the script. Why then run the risk of falling off in the music?

To suppose that music re-recorded from gramophone discs can suffice is a fallacy. Its use is liable to mar the whole effect of a film. Apart from the general difficulty in finding music sufficiently appropriate, as I know to my cost, it is almost impossible to find, in one work, passages suitable for every sequence in a film. Yet if more than one work be employed, or, worse still, more than one composer, the music will be lacking in homogeneity. Moreover, the best recorded music available boils down to a selection of the well-known concert works. These, to a number of people, will have associations quite beyond the control of the director of the film. They will recall past performances and memories. "What's that bit of music they're playing?" someone will ask. "I know it so well," another will say. Three seconds of film lost, half a minute of film lost. However much or however little it be, the attention has wandered and the illusion of the eye has been shattered by the distraction of the ear. Music that was to link two small sections of film together has had the reverse effect. It is essential therefore that music in the Documentary film should be devoid of association.

There is no dearth of composers—of British composers—to supply this need. The growing interest in films is reflected in the number of eminent composers who have now written film music—Addinsell, Alwyn, Benjamin, Bliss, Britten, Greenwood, Lambert, Leigh, Toye, Walton, to mention a few. Musicians of this calibre can aid the Documentary, with its message to convey, by striking directly at the emotions. Urgency, fear, comedy or drama—all the traditional expressions—can now be built into a logical, musical whole, thus making a vast advance from the old days of "hurry" music, "the villain's entry," and "young love".

In effect, film music seems to me to fall under three general headings: 1. Pictorial Colour; 2. Emotional Colour; 3. Unexplored Territory.

The first and most obvious of these, Pictorial Colour, illustrates the place or object shown on the screen and is more or less realistic music—oriental, pastoral, or mechanical, as the case may be. In *Squadron* 992, for instance, a barrage balloon was being brought out of its hanger, and it gave a lurch in mid-air. The music, as it tripped through the air caused it to suggest some clumsy elephant dancing.

The second, Emotional Colour, amplifies the thought and feelings of the characters or the mood underlying the scene. In the rowing sequence of *Men of the Lightships*, the composer conveys not merely the actual rhythm of the rowing but some of the thoughts of the men—the horror and endurance of men bombed, machine-gunned in an open boat at sea, and lost for days in fog.

Another illustration of the use of this type of music can be heard in one of the early sequences of *The Lion Has Wings*, where the marching of Germany's youth was contrasted with the games of peace-loving Britons. The sombre rigidity of the music and the dreary harmonies gave an almost pathetic effect to what otherwise might have been a very impressive German marching scene. Had stirring martial music or the exciting sound of brass bands been used, an entirely wrong effect would have resulted.

This third heading, Unexplored Territory, comprises most of the experiments in recording, orchestration, rhythm and general musical effects. This is naturally an interesting field for the composer and offers the greatest possibilities for the development of a perfect form for music in pictures.

First and foremost is the question of collaborating music and the spoken word. In the Documentary the ideal blending of these two factors could draw its parallel from the concerto form of music, in which the orchestra accompanies and colours statements from the solo instrument, and develops and intensifies its various themes. With the commentary as the solo instrument, this recipe applied to films, could help to do away with the rather slap-dash mixing of commentary and music.

To overcome the technical difficulties of orchestrating for and re-recording with various types of voices, there is still much experimenting to be done. If the musical sounds least likely to interfere with the modulations of specific voices could be gauged accurately, there would be no need to fade-out music on account of the inaudibility of the words. This fading out must naturally destroy the essential flow of musical thought, and subconsciously create a disturbing element in any scene. It should be possible to write and score, as in the concerto, so that the voice, like the solo instrument, need never be lost.

Consider, as an example, J. B. Priestley's voice. During his broadcast last Sunday, it struck me that there was a voice which could take the place of the instruments of the middle register of the orchestra. The rest of the instruments would then confine themselves to the upper and lower registers, and neither would interfere with the other.

This process would be a step towards eliminating the theory that music can be crept in and faded out mechanically without the audience noticing—a feat which I maintain is impossible. A sound is either audible, or it isn't! The mechanical control of music, used with a purpose, however, can often give a good dramatic result, as in the artificial throttling of a big orchestral chord. But, as a general musical principle, in films it can never be successful.

In place of this half-hearted negative method of creeping in and fading out music, a positive foundation based on logical dissection of the musical possibilities must be found for every bit of music. Where, for example, the commentator's voice has worked up to a high emotional level, music can come and carry on the sound without its presence being noticed as a separate entity. It can develop rhythmic suggestions from words. It can carry ideas through dissolves and fade-outs. It can prepare the eye through the ear. It can merge un-noticeably from realistic sound into pure music. It can shock. It can startle. It can sympathise. It can sweeten. But, for the love of Mike, never let it be mediocre!

FILM LIBRARIES

Borrowers of films are asked to apply as much in advance as possible, to give alternative booking dates, and to return the films immediately after use. H. A hire charge is made. F. Free distribution. Sd. Sound. St. Silent.

Association of Scientific Workers, 30 Bedford Row, W.C.1. Scientific Film Committee. *Graded List of Films.* A list of scientific films from many sources, classified and graded for various types of audience. On request Committee will give advice on programme make-up and choice of films.

Austin Film Library. 24 films of motoring interest, industrial, technical and travel. Available only from the *Educational Films Bureau,* Tring, Herts. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

British Commercial Gas Association, Gas Industry House, 1 Grosvenor Place, S.W.1. Films on social subjects, domestic science, manufacture of gas. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & a few St. F.

British Council Film Department, 25 Savile Row, W.1. *Films of Britain,* 1940. Catalogue for overseas use only but provides useful synopses of 100 sound and silent documentary films.

British Film Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, W.C.1. (*a*) *National Film Library.* An important collection of documentary and other films. Available only to full members of B.F.I. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H. (*b*) *Some British and Foreign Documentary and other Short Films.* A general list of films and sources. (*c*) *Early Films.* Films 1896–1934 still available in Britain.

Coal Utilisation Joint Council, General Buildings, Aldwych, London, W.C.2. Films on production of British coal and miners' welfare. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. F.

Crookes' Laboratories, Gorst Road, Park Royal, N.W.10. *Colloids in Medicine.* 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. F.

Dartington Hall Film Unit, Totnes, South Devon. Classroom films on regional and economic geography. 16 mm. St. H.

Educational Films Bureau, Tring, Herts. A selection of all types of film. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Educational General Services, 37 Golden Square, W.1. A wide selection of films, particularly of overseas interest. Some prints for sale. 16 mm. & St. H.

Electrical Development Association, 2 Savoy Hill, Strand, W.C.2. Four films of electrical interest. Further films of direct advertising appeal are available only through members of the Association, 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Empire Film Library, Imperial Institute, S.W.7. Films primarily of Empire interest. With a useful subject index. 16 mm. & a few 35 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Ensign Film Library, 88–89 High Holborn, London, W.C.1. Wide selection of all types of films including fiction, comedies, documentaries, films of geography, animal life, industry. Some prints for outright sale. 16 mm. St. & a few Sd. H.

Film Centre, 34 Soho Square, W.1. *Mouvements Vibratoires.* A film on simple harmonic motion. French captions. 35 mm. & 16 mm. St. H.

Ford Film Library, Dagenham, Essex. Some 50 films of travel, engineering, scientific and comedy interest. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Gaumont-British Equipments, Film House, Wardour Street, W.1. Many films on scientific subjects, geography, hygiene, history, language, natural history, sport. Also feature films. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

G.P.O. Film Library, Imperial Institute, S.W.7. Over 100 films, mostly centred round communications. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Kodak, Ltd., Kingsway, W.C.2. (*a*) *Kodascope Library.* Instructional, documentary, feature, western, comedy. Strong on early American comedies. 16 mm. & 8 mm. St. H. (A separate *List of Educational Films,* extracted from the above, is also published. A number of films have teaching notes.) (*b*) *Medical Film Library.* Circulation restricted to members of medical profession. Some colour films. Some prints for outright sale. 16 mm. St. H.

March of Time, Dean House, 4 Dean Street, W.1. Selected *March of Time* items, including *Inside Nazi Germany, New Schools for Old, America Thinks it Over.* 16 mm. Sd. H.

Mathematical Films. Available from B. G. D. Salt, 5 Carlingford Road, Hampstead, N.W.3. Five mathematical films suitable for senior classes. 16 mm. & 9.5 mm. St. H.

Metropolitan-Vickers Electrical Co., Ltd., Trafford Park, Manchester 17. *Planned Electrification,* a film on the electrification of the winding and surface gear in a coal mine. Available for showing to technical and educational groups. 16 mm. Sd. F.

Pathescope, North Circular Road, Cricklewood, N.W.2. Wide selection of silent films, including cartoons, comedies, drama, documentary, travel, sport. Also good selection of early American and German films. 9.5 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Petroleum Films Bureau, 15 Hay Hill, Berkeley Square, W.1. Twenty technical and documentary films. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. F.

Religious Film Library, 104 High Holborn, W.C.1. Films of religious and temperance appeal, also list of supporting films from other sources. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Scottish Central Film Library, 2 Newton Place, Charing Cross, Glasgow, C.3. A wide selection of teaching films from many sources. Contains some silent Scots films not listed elsewhere. Library available to groups in Scotland only. 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Sound-Film Services, 10 Park Place, Cardiff. Library of selected films including Massingham's *And So to Work* and Pollard's *Dragon of Wales. Rome* and *Sahara* have French commentaries. 16 mm. Sd. H.

Southern Railway, General Manager's Office, Waterloo Station, S.E.1. Seven films (one in colour) including *Building an Electric Coach, South African Fruit* (Southampton Docks to Covent Garden), and films on seaside towns. 16 mm. St. F.

Strand Film Company, 5A Upper St. Martin's Lane, W.C.2. Eleven films available for non-theatrical distribution including *Aerial Milestones, Chapter and Verse, Give the Kids a Break,* and a number of others of Empire and general interest, including 3 silent Airways films. Mostly 35 mm. Sd. A few 16 mm. St. F.

Wallace Heaton, Ltd., 127 New Bond Street, W.1. Three catalogues. Sound 16 mm., silent 16 mm., silent 9.5 mm. Sound catalogue contains number of American feature films, including *Thunder Over Mexico,* and some shorts. Silent 16 mm. catalogue contains first-class list of early American, German and Russian features and shorts, 9.5 catalogue has number of early German films and wide selection of early American and English slapstick comedies. 16 mm. & 9.5 mm. Sd. & St. H.

Workers' Film Association, 145 Wardour Street, W1. Films of democratic and co-operative interest. Notes and suggestions for complete programmes. Some prints for sale. 35 mm. & 16 mm. Sd. & St. H.

CATALOGUE OF THE MONTH

National Film Library Catalogue. Second edition, published by the British Film Institute. Price One Shilling.

167 closely printed pages packed with interesting matter, reference and illustration. 137 pages are devoted to the National Film archives. This section is much more than the catalogue it modestly claims to be. It is in fact a concise and lively short history of the motion picture from views on a linen roller dated about 1790 to today. Under the record of books appears "The Biascope, or Dial of Life Explained", by Granville Penn, Esq., London, 1814, being "an account of a device to impress man with the passage of time and so inspire him to moral conduct". Under National Government propaganda films (1931–35) appear the following items:—Arthur Prince and Jim (1935), in a ventriloquial sketch, *The Great Recovery* (1934), and *Red Tape Farm* (1931).

Apart from records of material under permanent preservation, 30 pages cover a magnificent selection of films that are borrowable by full members of the Institute. For 1*s.* 6*d.* per reel one can see Charlie again in *The Champion*; prove Euclid I: 32 never to forget it; or be witness to the tremendous challenge behind the simple title words "Enough to Eat".

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